



ON TRACK

The E-Bulletin of the Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers

www.marp.org

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The Michigan Association of Railroad Passengers, Inc. (MARP) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation established in 1973 to improve passenger train service, travel conditions for passengers, and to work for the preservation of historic rail stations.

Monthly meetings are held at locations around the state. Check the website for dates and venues. The public is invited to attend.

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2017 MEETINGS

14 January – REO Town Depot (former Grand Trunk Depot), Lansing
18 February – 1st Methodist Church, Kalamazoo
18 March – Clinton Northern Railway Museum, St. Johns
22 April – Grand Trunk Pub, Detroit
13 May – Chicago Union Station
10 June – Executive Committee
15 July – Traverse City
19 August – Bangor
23 September – Annual Meeting at Durand Union Station
October – tentative Grand Rapids
November – tentative SE Michigan
December – Executive Committee

Visit www.marp.org
Email marprail@yahoo.com

Midwest Regional Rail Plan Study Underway

The forty-three member **Stakeholder Planning Group** met recently at St. Paul Union Station for the second of four day-long workshops that will guide study elements and provide input and feedback to the FRA-led **Midwest Regional Rail Plan Study** (MWRRP). This 18-month long process will develop a strategic 40-year framework to be used by the states to advance planning, procurement and operations issues in the development of an integrated passenger rail network for the Midwest region.

All of the slide presentations from the Stakeholders' Workshop #2 **may be viewed here**. You will find these presentations informative, useful and provocative, detailing as they do the first level results of the CONNECT tool used by the consultants to examine performance of passenger rail corridors and networks.

An analysis of current train, auto and air travel patterns between major Midwest markets (Slides 45-59) illustrates potential changes in market share for trains as a result of increasing frequencies and decreasing travel times. For example, decreasing CHI-DET travel time from 5.35 hours to 2.00 hours increases market share in this mixed air/auto market from 0.02 to 0.19 (Slide 51). By contrast, the air-dominated market CHI-MSP would see its market share increase from 0.01 to 0.53 if travel time were reduced by 4.5 hours.

"Building Blocks Analysis" divides the Midwest into 5 sub-regions and poses "key questions" for each (Slides 65-69), e.g., "What is the relative demand of Michigan markets (Lansing, Flint, Port Huron) for travel to the west (Chicago) vs. to the east (Detroit/Toronto)?" Cost modeling (Slides 71-102) compares capital and operating/maintenance cost estimates of the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative developed a decade ago with CONNECT estimates, revealing striking capital cost increases on existing routes, e.g., 80% for Michigan routes (Slides 80-82). Less dramatic are comparisons of current Amtrak operating and maintenance costs with CONNECT estimates (Slides 95-97). In fact, Michigan routes show a decrease (Slide 97). Surprising are the direct costs of the intercity train's portion of a rail station (Slide 88). Slides 103-112 show possible network configurations in each of the sub-regions.

You are invited to join the conversation as an "interested party".
Go to MidwestRailPlan.org and click on the CONTACT button.



MARP Member Meeting Saturday, July 15

10:00 am – Noon

Traverse Area District Library

610 Woodmere Ave, Traverse City MI 49686

Map & Directions

Tyler Bevier will speak about BATA, the multi-jurisdictional arrangement that serves Bay Area transit needs. Groundwork Center will update us on the A2TC project to connect Ann Arbor and Traverse City with passenger train service. Details on the website www.marp.org Or send email to marprail@yahoo.com.

MRC

Midwest Rail Conference

Conference Program



Midwest Rail Conference 2017
Midwest Connections: Passenger and Freight Rail Look to the Future
 August 15 - 17, 2017
 WMU Fetzer Center, Kalamazoo, MI

Midwest Rail Conference

"Midwest Connections: Passenger and Freight Rail Look to the Future"

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In its fifth year, the Conference focus has been expanded to encompass the broader Midwest region. In addition, the 2017 conference will join forces with two other events by leading rail transportation organizations: the **Summerail 2017** event organized annually by the Freight Rail Transportation Committee (AR040) of the Transportation Research Board; and the annual meeting of **National University Rail Center (NURail)**, the first USDOT OST-R University Transportation Center dedicated to the advancement of North American rail transportation.

Events will kick off with the **Student Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Outing** at the Ridgeview Golf Course and **Committee Meetings** on Tuesday morning/afternoon, followed by the **Opening Reception**

and live music with the **Norfolk Southern Lawmen Band** at the Bell's Brewery "Backroom" in Kalamazoo.

Technical Sessions will take place all day Wednesday, August 16, at the WMU Fetzer Center. The luncheon **Keynote Speaker** will be Joseph McHugh, senior vice president and chief for Amtrak Government Affairs and Corporate Communication.

The opening plenary session is a panel on "Autonomous Vehicles and Their Impact on the Rail Industry". Following that, three panelists will talk about "State DOT Rail Programs" in Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin. "High(er) Speed Rail" will be discussed from the perspectives of IL-DOT, an academic researcher, and a rail and transit consultant from Parsons Brinckerhoff. Other break-out sessions will discuss "Future of Freight", "Urban Rail", "Short Lines", and "Inter-City Passenger Services".

The conference will wrap up on Thursday with **field trips** featuring a visit to a Cargill facility in Decatur, a train ride to Battle Creek on the upgraded **Wolverine Higher Speed Rail Corridor**, topped off with a visit to the **Little River Railroad** in Coldwater.

CLICK HERE to view the (almost complete) Conference Program

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION ends Friday, June 30. REGULAR REGISTRATION begins July 1 at a rate of \$250 per person.

Blocks of rooms at four Kalamazoo hotels will be held until July 24 for conference participants.

To register, view the complete 3-day Agenda, and learn about lodging

Visit rail.mtu.edu/event/mrc2017.

QLINE Extends Free Rides All Summer

A gift from the Kresge Foundation will extend free rides on Detroit's new QLINE streetcar through Labor Day.

Ridership on the Woodward Avenue line, which opened on May 12, has been brisk but some operational challenges have emerged. M-1 Rail and its operational partner, Transdev North America, are working "to provide consistent service with streetcars arriving every 15 minutes on weekdays in the short term and 12 minutes long term," according to M-1 Rail COO Paul Childs.

M-1 reports 100,000 riders during the first month of operation, an average of 3,300 per day. The goal of the system's financial model is 5,000 to 8,000 daily riders.

An unexpected bright spot in this period has been the extraordinary performance of the batteries that power the

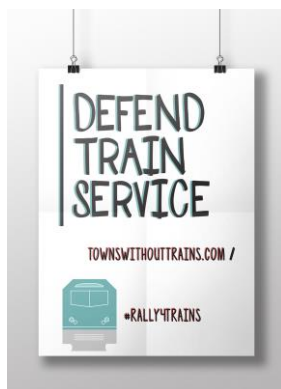
cars along some stretches of the 3.3 mile route. This will allow for off-wire operation 80% of the time, up from 60% of the time. Less time charging the batteries along the route means shorter wait times for riders.

Other tweaks to the system include: training additional operators, which will allow five cars to run during peak hours and four cars off-peak; giving streetcars priority signals at certain intersections; limiting stops to stations with passengers waiting to get on or off; better enforcement of policies to keep QLINE routes clear of obstructions.

The Kresge Foundation originally contributed \$50 million to the \$187 million streetcar project.



Photo by Steve Sobel



Is Your Town On The Hit List?

Michiganders can confidently answer the question about losing passenger train service with a resounding “No!”. Our state supports services on three routes, with stations in 22 communities and another 25 communities served by Thruway buses that connect people throughout the state to those train stations.

For our neighbors in Ohio and those living south of Indianapolis in Indiana, along with people in more than 220 other communities all across the country, the answer is not so clear.

The President’s proposed FY2018 budget calls for ending federal support for Amtrak’s long distance routes. This is no small matter to the more than 140 million riders who use those trains.

In response, people in 40 communities around the country held **#Rally4Trains** events on June 23 and 24. They gathered at train stations and in public spaces to raise awareness of the importance of trains to the vitality of their towns and to urge their neighbors to **send a message** to their representatives in Washington DC.

Toledo and Cleveland are two of the towns on the “hit list”. Served by four daily (more correctly “nightly”) trains arriving at inconvenient times, these trains nevertheless “are used by 650,000 people per year, enough to fill every seat on more than a dozen Boeing 737 jets every day,” according to Ken Prendergast, executive director of All Aboard Ohio. “They link big cities to small towns that have no other intercity public transportation, like Bryan OH and Alliance OH.”

Wausau WI is one of many small towns that depend on trains, even though no trains actually arrive at their former train stations. For a trip to St. Paul, a Wausau resident endures a 2-hour bus trip to Portage WI and a 7-hour wait for the arrival of the *Empire Builder*. Yet, they joined in with an enthusiastic **#Rally4Trains** event because without the *Builder*, their travel options are limited.

Nor do Fisher IN and Noblesville IN have Amtrak trains arriving at their stations. What they do have is *The Nickel Plate Road*, an excursion train that attracts 40,000 visitors to the area annually. Townsfolk were eager to add their outreach and education efforts to the campaign to keep the *Cardinal* from going the way of the *Nickel Plate*, as well as to advance the proposal to restore passenger train service from Chicago through Fort Wayne to Columbus.

Columbus OH joined the rally to remind legislators and decision makers, once again, that Columbus is the largest city in the nation with NO passenger train service.

Pictured below are three of the rallies held in communities near to us. *Left to right:* Roy G. Holland Memorial Park in Fisher IN; Children’s Park at Martin Luther King, Jr. Plaza across the street from the Toledo OH Amtrak station; Federal Hill Commons in Noblesville IN. The photos on the left and right are courtesy of SaveTheNickelPlate.org. The middle photo was sent to us by Bill Gill, who organizes the annual Toledo Train Day.



WHAT IF . . . you could no longer hop a train to Glacier Park . . . or Washington DC . . . or Denver?
Tell your member of Congress to reject the President’s proposal to eliminate long-distance trains.

CLICK HERE to send a message that trains are important to you!

View from elsewhere . . .

"The QLINE holds much promise as an integral piece of a true regional transit system and we are invested in its long-term success. With dozens of summer festivals and activities up and down the Woodward Corridor, our motivation to extend free fares is to expose every city and metro resident to the QLINE. Building a sustainable ridership will enable the streetcar to continue to serve as a positive demonstration project for regional transit."

-- Kresge President and CEO Rip Rapson in announcing the foundation's decision **to cover all fares** on Detroit's QLINE streetcar through Labor Day.

"U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) should be congratulated for having the political courage to promote any type of tax increase, but the booby prize for proposing such a small increase in the motor vehicle fuel tax . . . infrastructure backlog needs warrant a much larger increase -- at least \$0.10/gallon -- and on-going maintenance needs will only rise as infrastructure age increases."

--J. Howard Harding, commenting on **H.R. 1664** "Investing in America: A Penny for Progress Act" that would increase federal gas tax by a penny.



Alpine Rallies for the Sunset Ltd.

Alpine Texas wants and needs its trains. Train service is important to Alpine. The town of 6,000 is located in far Southwest Texas on the way to Big Bend National Park. There are no commercial airports within 100 miles of Alpine and sketchy bus service. The link to the outside world from Brewster [and surrounding counties] is the arrival of Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*, a lifeline to many that live in the region. --Thanks to Peter LeCody, President of Texas Rail Advocates, for this comment in **his report** on the #Rally4Trains event held on June 23.



Visit "Discover Pure Michigan"
On the Amtrak Website
[click here](#)

See Hot Deals for the Midwest
[click here](#)



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